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➤THE OLD TESTAMENT STUDENT.◀

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WHATEVER THE OLD TESTAMENT STUDENT may not have done, something certainly has been accomplished by it in *one* direction, viz., in emphasizing the importance of studying entire books of the Bible. The outline-studies of 1 and 2 Samuel, Isaiah XL.-LXVI., Genesis, Exodus and Hosea (in the present number) have been presented within a year; and the reception accorded them has been so favorable as to warrant the presentation, in the future, of similar studies of other books. The demand for these book-studies indicates most clearly a tendency to adopt more widely the historico-critical method of interpretation, for such work is of no value to those who adopt a mystical or allegorical method. The plan of the book-studies has been applied to the books of the New Testament by many of our readers. Let it also be applied to other Old Testament books. It should be borne in mind that such a study prepared by one's self will prove to be vastly more helpful than if prepared by another. Let every man make his own outlines, and let no minister, no interpreter of the Divine Word rest satisfied until every book of both Testaments has thus been treated.

THE interpretation given individual verses of the Bible, by intelligent ministers, is sometimes painful. One often thinks that the minister has neglected to note whether the verse under consideration belongs to the Old or to the New Testament. Too frequently he fails even to determine whether it was uttered by an inspired or an uninspired writer, it having been forgotten that inspired writers often give us the words of others without necessarily endorsing them. It is, of course, an every-day occurrence to assign to a verse a sense which it not only does not have, but which it could not receive by the most tortured exegesis. Why will men persist in this thing? In a recent

"Easter service" on the "Resurrection of Christ," out of twelve Old Testament passages cited as bearing on this subject, only *two* contain any reference to a resurrection, and but *one* of these to the resurrection of the Messiah. Yet verses from all parts of Scripture, which a close examination of the context would have shown to be entirely foreign to the subject, are brought together and interpreted as teaching this fact. Such work brings discredit upon the Bible and its doctrines. There is nothing more true than that the friends of the Bible have done it much more injury than its enemies have ever been able to accomplish.

THE prevalence of the "critical" ideas in their destructive form is, without doubt, greatly to be deplored. There are other tendencies of Bible-teaching to-day, which are equally injurious. Very few realize the strong grasp which the "mystical" tendency holds on the Bible-students of our day. Some openly confess it and pride themselves in it. Many are unconsciously under its sway. There are very few who are not more or less tainted with it. Is it then so great an evil? Undoubtedly. To this tendency may be traced, nearly, if not all, of the reproach which has been heaped upon the Sacred Word from the beginning of its existence. At its feet may be laid the responsibility for the low estimate at which the "world" regards the Bible. Let it once be understood that Sacred Writ has one meaning,—a meaning which can be ascertained by the application of the laws of language and the principles of common sense, and the ridicule of it which one meets in every class of society, the indifference to it which characterizes so large a portion of so-called believers, will cease. The darkness of the middle ages has passed. Let this instrument, prepared and guided by Satan himself, but wielded by the Bible's own friends, be broken in pieces, and rendered useless.

No Bible-student, in these days, can be blind to the interest, so widely prevailing, in the work of exploration. If one will but sum up the wonderful discoveries that have been made within twenty years, or even within a decade, he will be surprised at the results. In Egypt, in Syria, in Babylonia, every month brings to us new developments. The work of exploration is largely due to the increased interest in Bible-study; but on the other hand, it contributes largely to this same end. Two difficulties, however, prevent our reaping the full results of the activity now being manifested in this direction:

(1) The slowness of Bible-students, in general, to take hold and make use of these results. The average student is indifferent to the whole subject and allows himself to remain in entire ignorance of the most important facts. He prefers the old-fashioned, mystical, hit-or-miss way of studying the Bible; that which requires study or investigation he leaves to others. "Scott" and "Henry" are all that he needs. Such a method scarcely does justice to that book which, of all books, should engross our attention.

(2) The lack of means to carry on the work as rapidly and as widely as it deserves. An investment of money which would be more profitable would be difficult to find. Do we desire evidence to substantiate the claims of the Bible? Such work will accomplish more in five years than theoretical argument will accomplish in a century. By a union of effort on the part of men of means and men able to carry on such explorations, the most valuable results could be obtained. Scholars stand ready to prosecute the work even at the risk of their lives. Are there not men who will furnish the necessary money?

THREE years ago the editor of THE STUDENT was sharply criticised and soundly berated for certain statements concerning the prevalence of the so-called critical views. The statements made at that time were strictly correct, though denied by many. In this, as in all other mooted questions, time points out the truth. In the last number, the statement of Dr. Samuel Ives Curtiss was quoted to the effect that but a *single* Old Testament professor in Germany still maintains the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. The April *Presbyterian Review* contains the following statement by Dr. Charles A. Briggs:—

"There has been a steady advance until the present position of agreement has been reached in which Jew and Christian, Roman Catholic and Protestant, Rationalistic and Evangelical scholars, Reformed and Lutheran, Presbyterian and Episcopal, Unitarian, Methodist and Baptist all concur. The analysis of the Hexateuch into several distinct original documents is a purely literary question in which no article of faith is involved. Whoever in these times, in the discussion of the literary phenomena of the Hexateuch, appeals to the ignorance and prejudices of the multitude as if there were any peril to the faith in these processes of the Higher Criticism risks his reputation for scholarship by so doing. There are no Hebrew professors on the Continent of Europe, so far as I know, who would deny the literary analysis of the Hexateuch into the four great documents. The professors of Hebrew in the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge, and Edinburgh, and tutors in a large number of theological colleges hold to the same opinion. A very considerable number of the Hebrew professors of America are in accord with them. There are, indeed, a few professional Hebrew scholars

who hold to the traditional opinion, but these are in a hopeless minority. I doubt whether there is any question of scholarship whatever in which there is greater agreement among scholars than in this question of the literary analysis of the Hexateuch."

Now, however true or false this critical position itself may be, its acceptance as a matter of fact is very general, and is rapidly becoming more general. It is not wise to shut our eyes to *facts*, however unpleasant they may be. Grant that the prevalence of these ideas is destructive to the interests of true Bible-work; the thing to be done, in this case, is to plan how their influence shall be counteracted, and not how those who are not in a position to ascertain the truth for themselves shall be convinced that they do not exist.